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ABSTRACT

Parents can play a key role in attaining the United States' National Education Goals, a main component of which is that all children will be ready to learn when they enter school. This guide for parents provides basic information on factors related to school success and a series of activities that parents can do with their children, ages 5 through 11, to help them succeed in school. Part 1 of the guide serves as an introduction. Part 2, "The Basics," addresses learning at home, in the community, and at school, and emphasizes the importance of starting early, communicating with children, handling children's homework, connecting with the community, and being involved at school. How children learn and what children learn from parents are also addressed. The importance of both active and quiet learning, limiting television viewing, and encouraging active learning are emphasized. The guide then lists important messages for parents to convey to their children about school success: (1) sharing one's own experiences and goals; (2) establishing realistic, consistent family rules; and (3) encouraging children to think about the future. Part 3 of the guide, "Activities," comprises the bulk of the guide, and contains parent-child activities arranged by approximate child age levels. Each activity lists its goal, benefits to children, materials needed, and step-by-step instructions. Part 4 of the guide, "Parents and the Schools," explains when parents should talk with teachers, gives recommendations for parent-teacher conferences, and makes suggestions for volunteering. Contains 20 references. (KDFB)

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# Helping Your Child Succeed in School

with activities for children
aged 5 through 11

By Dorothy Rich

Edited by Margery Martin
Illustrated by Betty MacDonald

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement

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# Foreword

"Why?"

This is the question we parents are always trying to answer. It's good that children ask questions: that's the best way to learn. All children have two wonderful resources for learning—imagination and curiosity. As a parent, you can awaken your children to the joy of learning by encouraging their imagination and curiosity.

*Helping Your Child Succeed in School* is one in a series of books on different education topics intended to help you make the most of your child's natural curiosity. Teaching and learning are not mysteries that can only happen in school. They also happen when parents and children do simple things together.

For instance, you and your child can: sort the socks on laundry day—sorting is a major function in math and science; cook a meal together—cooking involves not only math and science but good health as well; tell and read each other stories—storytelling is the basis for reading and writing (and a story about the past is also history); or play a game of hopscotch together—playing physical games will help your child learn to count and start on a road to lifelong fitness.

By doing things together, you will show that learning is fun and important. You will be encouraging your child to study, learn, and stay in school.

All of the books in this series tie in with the **National Education Goals** set by the President and the Governors. The goals state that, by the year 2000: every child will start school ready to learn; at least 90 percent of all students will graduate from high school; each American student will leave the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades demonstrating competence in core subjects; U.S. students will be first in the world in math and science

achievement; every American adult will be literate, will have the skills necessary to compete in a global economy, and will be able to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; and American schools will be liberated from drugs and violence so they can focus on learning.

This book is a way for you to help meet these goals. It will give you a short run-down on facts, but the biggest part of the book is made up of simple, fun activities for you and your child to do together. Your child may even beg you to do them. At the end of the book is a list of resources, so you can continue the fun.

As U.S. Education Secretary Lamar Alexander has said:

> *The first teachers are the parents, both by example and conversation. But don't think of it as teaching. Think of it as fun.*

So, let's get started. I invite you to find an activity in this book and try it.

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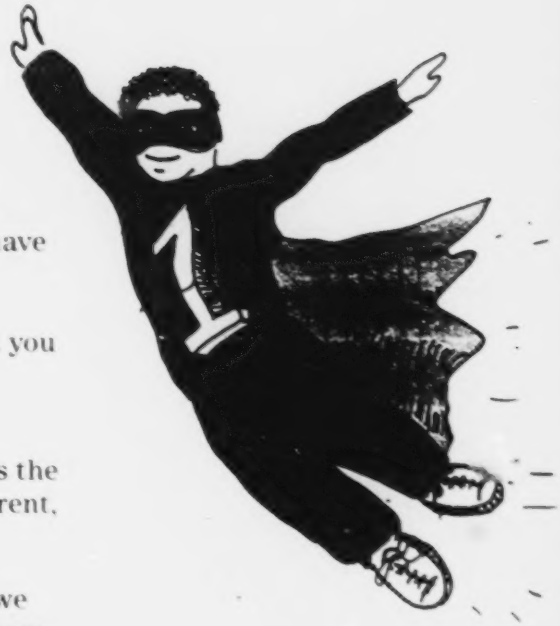
# Introduction

**What is the earliest memory you have of being in school?**

**Excitement?**
**Fear?**
**Wonder?**
**Rejection?**
**Joy?**



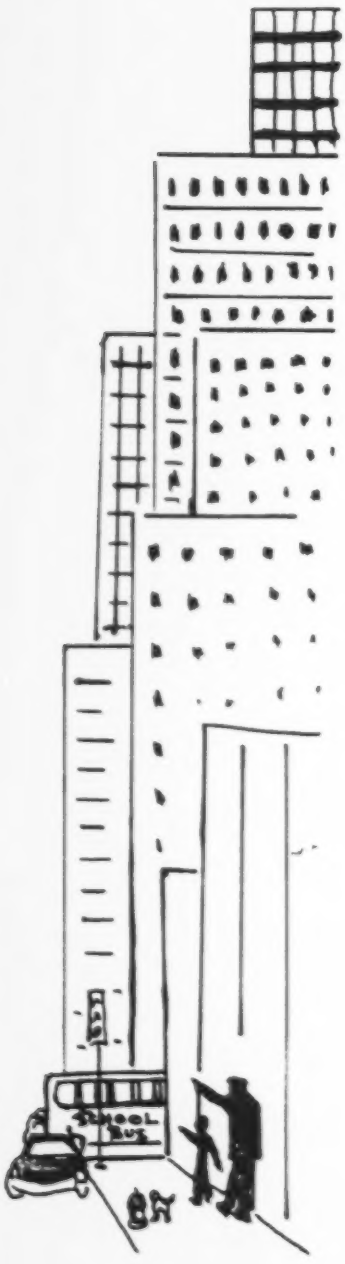
How do you feel about your years in school? If you have happy memories, chances are you can help your children be excited about learning and have good memories, too. If you disliked school, it's harder, but you can do lots of things to help make school a better experience for your children than it was for you.

The good news is that every child in every family has the power to succeed in school and in life, and every parent, grandparent, and caregiver can help.

But how do we help our children succeed? How do we give them the power? The most important thing we can do is be involved with our children's education even before they are in school, then *stay* involved once they are in school.

This book is about what we can do in our own homes, right now, that will help our children go to school wanting to learn. It includes:

- Basic information on what we know about success in school;
- Activities for children ages 5-11 to help them acquire the skills to succeed;




- Questions and answers about when to talk to the teacher and how to handle parent-teacher conferences.

Success in school takes hard work, planning, a few basic skills, and the will to want to succeed. How do we pass these ideas on to our children?

What we know about success in school is a combination of common sense mixed with new ideas about learning.

We do know the following:

1. **Where our children learn** is important. We can find inexpensive and easy things to do at home—where our children first start learning—that will make them *want* to learn. We can also strengthen our ties with the community and the schools, where learning continues.

2. **What our children learn** from us is important. What we say and do can build their maturity and self-confidence.

3. **How our children learn** from us is important. All of us teach our children every day, whether we realize it or not. We can make sure we show them a variety of ways to learn.

Now, how do we take these facts and turn them into ways to help our children do well in school?

# The Basics

## Where Our Children Learn

### At Home

It's no surprise to anyone that children need time with their parents. And even though most parents are extremely busy, whether they work outside of the home or not, they do find time to spend with their children. But they want that time to count in helping prepare their children for the world they will find outside the home.

What counts most is what we *say* and *do at home*, not how rich or poor we are or how many years of school we have finished. When children can count on getting attention at home, they have a greater sense of security and self-worth. This will help them do better not only in school, but also when they grow up.

If you think about it, school, while very important, does not really take up very much time. In the United States, the school year averages 180 days; in other industrialized nations, the school year can extend up to 240 days, and students are often in school more hours per day. So, the hours and days a child is *not* in school are important for learning, too.

**Communicating.** This is probably the most important activity we can do in our home, and it doesn't cost anything. Ask questions, listen for answers. These are no-cost, high-value things to do.

Think of conversation as being like a tennis game with talk, instead of a ball, bouncing back and forth. Communication can happen any time, any place—in the car, on a bus, at mealtime, at bedtime.

When our children enter and continue school with good habits of communication, they are in a position to succeed—to learn all that has to be learned, and to become confident students.

**Starting early.** Here are some things you can do when your children are young:

- Let them see you read, and read to them and with them. Visit the library. If they are old enough, make sure they have their own card. Keep books, magazines, and newspapers around the house.
- Keep pencils and paper, crayons, and washable markers handy for notes, grocery lists, and schoolwork. Writing takes practice, and it starts at home.
- Teach children to do things for themselves rather than do the work for them. Patience when children are young pays off later.
- Help children, when needed, to break a job down into small pieces, then do the job one step at a time. This works for everything—getting dressed, a job around the house, or a big homework assignment.
- Develop, with your child, a reasonable, consistent schedule of jobs around the house. List them on a calendar, day by day.
- Every home needs consistent rules children can depend on. Put a plan into action, and follow through.
- Give each child an easy-to-reach place in which to put things away.
- Set limits on TV viewing so that everyone can get work done with less background noise.

- Watch TV *with* your children and talk about what you see.

**Handling homework.** These are the messages to get across to your children about homework:

- Education is important. Homework has to be done. Let children know that this is what you value.
- Try to have a special place where each child can study.
- Help your children plan how to do all the things they need to do—study, work around the house, play, etc.
- Let your children know that you have confidence in them. Remind them of specific successes they have had in the past perhaps in swimming, soccer, cooking, or in doing a difficult homework assignment.
- Don't expect or demand perfection. When children ask you to look at what they've done—from skating a figure 8 to a math assignment—show interest and praise them when they've done something well. If you have criticisms or suggestions, make them in a helpful way.

The time we spend exchanging ideas at home with our children is vitally important in setting the tone, the attitudes, and the behaviors that make the difference in school.

## In the Community

In many parts of our nation, the ties among neighbors have been weakened. For the sake of our children, they need to be rebuilt, and you can help. Be sure to introduce your children to your neighbors. You might even try a "child watch" program where adults who are home during the day keep an eye out for children when they walk to and from school and stand at bus stops.

Some schools are helping families connect with the community by, for example, becoming centers for social services as well as for education. Getting to know your child's school can help you, in a very real way, get to know a major part of your community. It can also help you build a network of wider community support for your family.

## At School

Parents can become involved with the schools in several different ways, by working with children at home, volunteering, sharing information, and helping to make policy. We need to remember that what works in one community (or for one family) may not necessarily work in another.

It may no longer be possible for parents to volunteer as often for school activities. However, working with children at home and sharing information with the school are two things all parents can do.

The section after the activities, "Parents and the Schools," has some suggestions on how to get the most out of talking to your child's teacher. Many teachers say they rarely receive information from parents about problems at home. Many parents say they don't know what the school expects of their child. Sharing information is essential, and both teachers and parents are responsible for making it happen.

With our help, our children can become confident students, able to handle the challenges of school. This means:

- Talking with our children about the value of hard work and about the importance of education;

- Talking about what's happening in school;
- Reading report cards and messages that come from school;
- Going to school and meeting with teachers;
- Taking part in school events when you can; and
- Finding out about resources in the community.

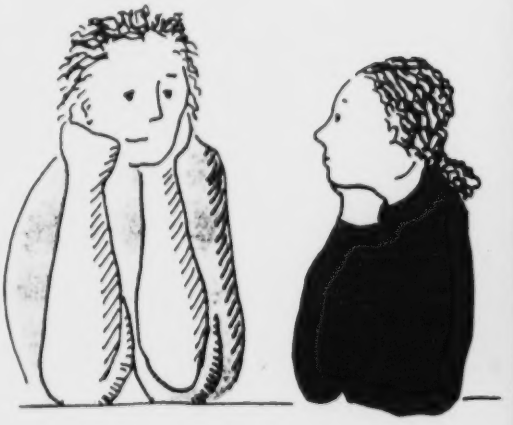
## What Our Children Learn From Us

Sometimes we think that all our children need to know to be ready to start school are the ABCs and how to count. The reality is that most children can learn these things pretty fast once they get to school. What they do need—and what you can give—is the message that education is valuable: through education, people can shape their own future.

So, talk about learning, share the fun and excitement of new skills. Show your children that you are always learning, too. Read aloud, play games, and talk about events around the block and around the world.

Children tend to follow the examples set for them. When we say one thing and do another, children watch and learn. When we practice what we preach, children watch and learn.

The bottom line is that when we give our children the support and information they need, and expect them to do well, they do better in school and in life.



## How Our Children Learn From Us

Children need active, even noisy, learning as well as quiet learning such as reading. Active learning includes asking and answering questions (and trying to get more

than just "yes" or "no" answers); solving problems; and discussing a variety of topics.

Active learning can also take place when a child plays sports, spends time with friends, or goes to a museum or zoo. The active learning suggestions in the next section will help you think of even more things for you and your children to do.

**Limit TV watching.** Watching TV is an example of a quiet activity that children *can* learn from, but one that is a problem in almost every home. We know that children who watch a lot of TV learn less and get lower grades than students who watch little TV. And in international comparisons, U.S. students rank high in watching TV, but are near the bottom in doing homework. The result is that U.S. students know less than those in other countries.

**Encourage active learning.** What can we do? We can listen to our children's ideas and respond to them. We can let them jump in with questions and opinions when reading books together. When this type of give-and-take between parent and child happens at home, a child's participation and interest in school increases.

## What Messages To Send

Three of the important messages our children need about success in school can be sent by:

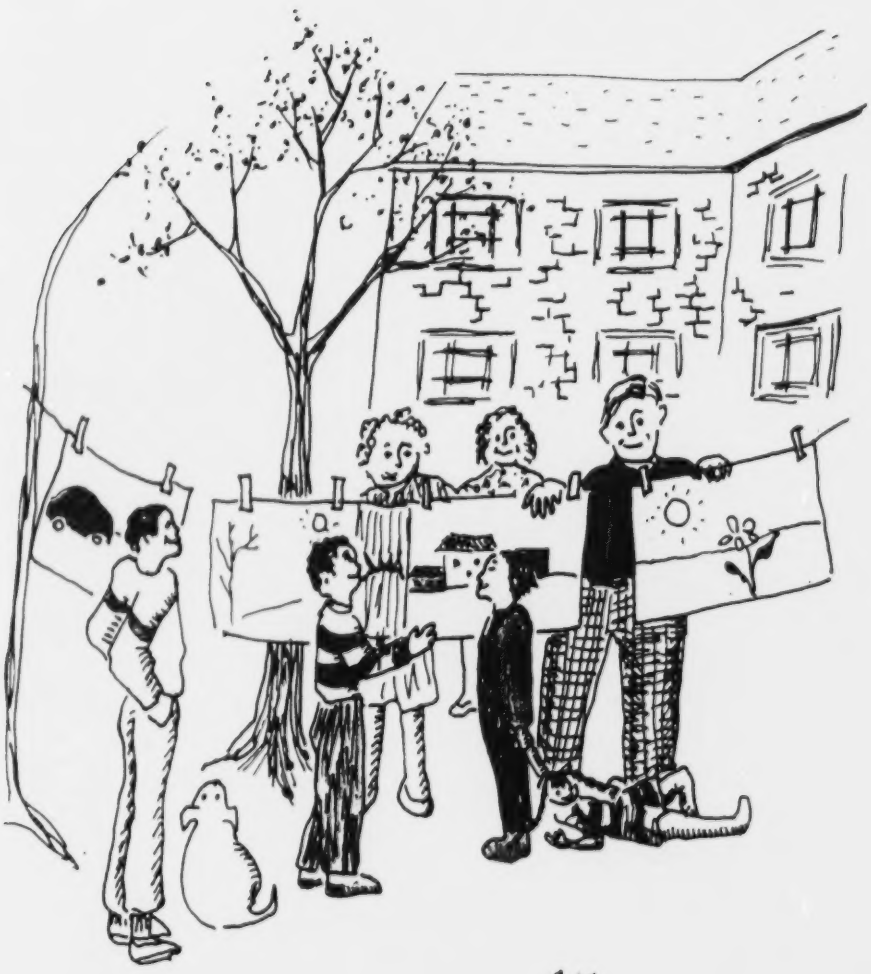
1. **Sharing our own experiences and goals** with our children, because children tend to adopt our ideals. They need to know how we feel about making an effort, working hard, and planning ahead.

2. **Establishing realistic, consistent family rules** for work around the house so our children can develop schedules and stable routines. Children need limits set even though they will test these limits over and

over again. Children need to know what they can depend on—and they need to be able to depend on the rules we make.

3. **Encouraging our children to think about the future.** Our children need realistic, reasonable expectations, and they need the satisfaction of having some of these expectations met. They need to take part in making decisions (and to learn that sometimes this means sacrificing fun now for benefits later) and they need to find out what happens as a result of decisions they have made.

Throw a stone into a pool and the circles widen and overlap. None of us lives in isolation. The circles of home, community, and school overlap also. For our children to learn and thrive, they need the support and encouragement of all of the circles in which we live. But the circle in the center is the home and that's where it all starts.



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# Activities

There is no one "right" way of doing these activities. Make changes, shorten or lengthen them to suit your child's attention span, or think up some activities of your own. Above all, enjoy them. And don't worry about what you might not have done in the past. Start where you are now, with the resources you have now.

In a box at the end of each activity is information on why that activity is important to your child's education. The suggested activities all build skills, attitudes, and behaviors children need for good study habits. They are designed to help develop personal maturity, enthusiasm for learning, and the ability to concentrate.

But that does not mean the activities are hard to do and won't be any fun. They are easy to do, cost little or no money, use materials found at home, and don't take much time.

Work out your own schedule for the activities. Don't forget to try them on vacation days or in the summer, too. If you've only used one part of an activity, you can go back to it and find the ideas you haven't tried. Experience indicates that all of the activities, in whole or in part, will be useful. Ability in schoolwork is like ability in sports: it takes practice to gain confidence, to become motivated, and to win.

## Age Levels

The activities are arranged by approximate age levels. But, of course, you are the best judge of what your child may be ready to try. Age levels of the activities are indicated by a symbol at the top of each activity:

**Ages 5-7**
The activities for these early school years focus on helping children get ready for schoolwork and get a head start on the habits and behaviors important for ongoing success in school.

**Ages 7-9**
These activities help children become organized and build early study skills and work habits.

**Ages 9-11**
These projects for children in the upper elementary grades continue to focus on work and study habits, with more emphasis on making personal decisions.

**Remember:**

- We can all be great teachers;
- Every home is a learning place;
- We don't need a lot of time to do a lot of good; and
- Everyone's abilities and skills can be improved.

## Let's Go

Pick an activity and try it with your children. You will know they are learning when they say, "Let me try it." And you'll know they understand when they shout: "Let me do it! Let me! Let me."

# Can You Top This?

**Teamwork is important in school. In this game, children practice taking turns and working with others. They also build language skills.**

## What you'll need

Imagination

## What to do

1. Make up a story, with parents and children taking turns, one sentence at a time.

   Decide on a topic. You might begin the first sentence with "Once upon a time a pirate lived in . . ."

   Continue taking turns making up and telling parts of the story until you decide to end it—maybe after 8 or 10 sentences.

2. Take turns beginning and finishing a story. Ask other family members and friends to join in.

**By making up stories, children can improve their language skills. They can also start to understand how ideas flow from one to another, and that everyone's ideas are important.**



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# Listen Up

**This game helps teach how to listen carefully and follow directions, two things that are important in school.**

## What you'll need

Any small object you can hide
Objects that make noise

## What to do

1. Hide a small object. Give directions to find it such as, "Take five steps ahead. Turn right. Keep the lamp to your left. Bend down and look to the right." Take turns doing this.

2. All but one person close their eyes. The person with his or her eyes open makes a sound (such as keys jangling, hands clapping, a bell ringing, a spoon tapping against a glass). Everyone else tries to guess what is making the sound.

3. Clap your hands to tap out a rhythm. Have another player listen and then clap that same rhythm back to you. Do it different ways: slow, fast, loud, soft. Make the rhythms harder as it gets easier to repeat them.

4. When taking a walk, or any place where you can stop for a few minutes, sit quietly for 30 seconds with your eyes closed, then tell each other what you heard: a baby crying, an airplane, a bird singing.

5. Take a walk. One of you tell the other person what to do—cross the street, turn left, look down. Take turns following each other's directions.

**Through practice, children can learn to listen carefully, see and hear details, and follow directions.**

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# Time Marches On

**This game will help your children see the difference between "a few seconds" and "a few minutes," and can help them be on time in school.**

## What you'll need

Paper
Pencil
A timer of some kind (alarm clock, kitchen timer)
Clock or watch with all 12 numerals and a second hand

## What to do

1. Ask your children to watch the second hand tick five seconds. Together, count off the seconds.

2. Count off 30 seconds. How many times can your child clap hands during this time? Take turns timing and watching each other.

3. Make guesses about how long ordinary things take:

   How long is a traffic light red or green?

   How long does it take to eat dinner?

   How long does it take to get ready for school?

   Test your guesses with the watch or timer. How close did you each come to the right answer?

4. Read a book aloud with your child for 3 minutes. Time yourselves. Then move up to 5 minutes, then to 10, and so on.

Learning that some things take longer than others will help your child understand how long it takes to do a task and how to plan for it. This activity will also help them increase their attention span.

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# Now You See It, Now You Don't

**This activity teaches children to pay close attention by seeing how long it takes different kinds of liquids to freeze and melt.**

## What you'll need

2 ice cube trays
A clock
Water
Small bowls
Paper
Pencil
Other liquids

## What to do

1. Together, fill one ice cube tray to the top with water. Fill the other tray only half full.

   Put both trays in the freezer. Check the clock. In 2 hours, look to see if the water has frozen (if not, wait until it *has* frozen).

   How long did it take the water in each tray to freeze?

   Did the smaller amount of water freeze faster than the larger amount?

2. Take an ice cube from each of the 2 trays. Put them in separate bowls to melt. Which cube melts faster—the larger one or the smaller one?

3. Put one ice cube in a window and another in the refrigerator (not freezer) and see how long they take to melt.

4. Try to freeze samples of liquids such as fruit juices. Compare their freezing times to that of water.

This activity can help your child understand that things don't happen immediately. It will also introduce the concept of change—liquid to solid to liquid again—and the idea of having to wait to get the result you want.



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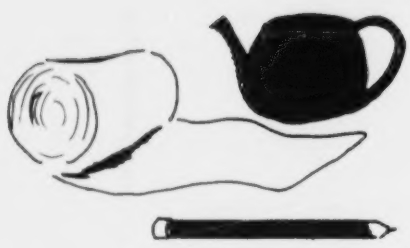
# Start to Finish

**Organization has to be learned. This activity lets children practice planning, beginning, and finishing a job—important parts of completing schoolwork.**

## What you'll need

Pencil
Paper
Items used to do a job around the house, such as watering plants or setting the table



## What to do

1. Together, select one job your child usually does around the house, such as watering plants.

   Ask your child to write down or tell you the "Plan," "Do," and "Finish" steps needed to do the job well.

   Look over these steps together and talk about possible changes.

| Plan | Do | Finish |
|---|---|---|
| Get Supplies<br>1. watering can<br>2. paper towels | 1. Fill can<br>2 Water plants<br>3. Wipe up spills<br>4. Pick off dead leaves | 1. Throw away towels and dead leaves<br>2. Put can away |

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2. See what happens if one plant isn't watered when it is supposed to be. How long does it take for the leaves to start changing color?

3. List the "plan," "do," and "finish" steps of one or two jobs you do around the house. Ask your child to help you think of ways to improve these steps.

4. When your children have a new task, help them plan the steps so they can do the job well and have a sense of accomplishment.

Sometimes taking time to plan seems like "a waste of time," but it has been shown that those who plan a job are usually more successful and do it in a shorter amount of time.

Seeing the changes from not watering a plant can introduce the idea of "cause and effect."

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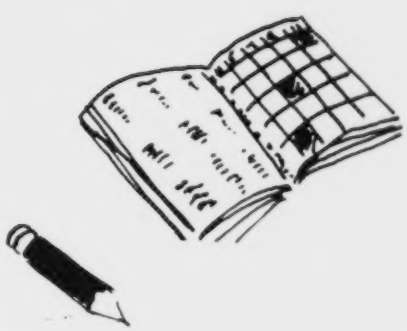

# I'm OK, We're OK

**All of us have ways in which we are special. This activity helps children recognize and appreciate how they, and others, are special.**

## What you'll need

Pen or pencil
Paper

## What to do

1. Together, think of and write down at least 2 things you like about yourselves (for example, I have a good sense of humor; I try to be fair).

   Write down 2 things you like about the others playing this game.

   Now, take turns talking about what others say they like about you.

2. Write down 2 things you would like to improve. When will you start? How long do you think it will take?

3. Think of some jobs around the house that both of you will feel proud of, like fixing special food for the family, teaching the family a new game, or fixing something that's broken.

4. Try to set a time every day, even a few minutes, when you can talk about things that happened that day.

Find times to listen to each other and to chat. A ride to the grocery store or a wait at the dentist's office can be a good time.

Self-confidence can make a difference in how much success a person has, both at school and later in life.

Talking about what happened during the day lets children work out problems early instead of having them pile up and become overwhelming.



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# Where Did I Put That?

**Children need help getting organized. A special place for school items helps make mornings smoother for parents *and* children.**

## What you'll need

Cardboard box
Crayons or markers

## What to do

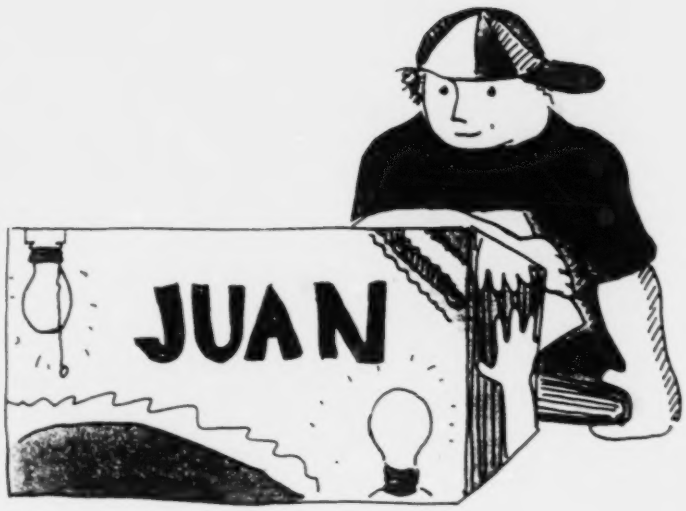
1. Find a sturdy cardboard box or carton large enough to hold notebooks and other school things. Let your child decorate it with pictures, words, or art work, and his or her name. Each child in the family can have a separate box.

Together, find a place to put the box. A spot near the front door or the place where your child does homework would be good.

School things should go in the box as soon as your child comes home from school. Later, all homework and anything else needed for school the next day should go into it.

In the winter, hats and mittens can also go in the box when they are dry.

2. Let your child make a rainy day box and put it in a different place (or make it a different color). Fill it with "treasures"—games, books, a new pencil. Invite other members of the family to put surprises in the box (no snakes or frogs, please).



Keeping all school items in one place helps teach children how much easier life can be when we are organized and plan ahead.

Show your appreciation when your child keeps things in order.

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# My Place

**This activity gives each child a separate place to study or play.**

## What you'll need

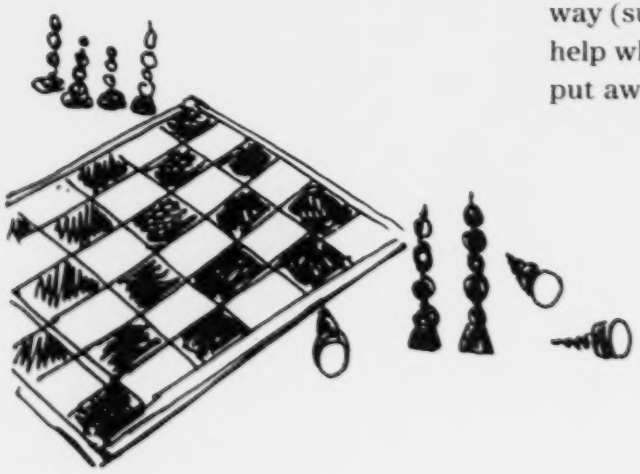
Space—even a tiny area will do
A small but steady table
1 chair
1 lamp
Small floor covering

## What to do

1. Together, find a quiet study area away from the TV and radio for *each child* (even those not old enough to have homework yet).

2. Cut down an old blanket, rug, or sheet to put on a small area of the floor. Use this to mark off each child's private space. Put the table and chair on the floor covering.

   This space does not *have* to be in the same place all the time. If the table is light weight, the floor cover can be put down any place it is out of the way (such as near the kitchen if a child needs help while dinner is being fixed). It can also be put away when it is not being used.



3. If the study space will always be in the same place, try out different arrangements of the furniture to see what works best. Arrange the lamp so the study area is well lit.

4. Together, label items with the child's name.

Watch for improvement and show pleasure when quality of work improves.

Children tend to argue over the same space (even in a big room). By having an area of the floor marked off, each child has a place that feels like his or her own. A special place also helps children focus on what they are studying.

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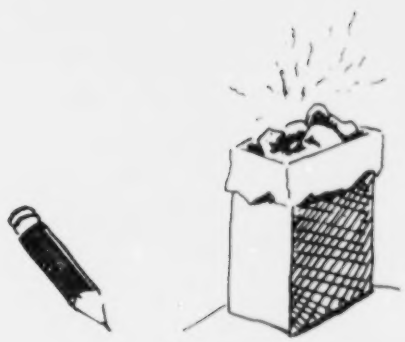

# Well Done!

**Children need the experience of doing chores. The following are ideas to help children be more responsible and realize the importance of people doing what they say they will do.**

## What you'll need

Helping hands

## What to do

1. Talk about what happens when people do the things they are responsible for (water the plants or feed pets, for example).

   Think about what would happen if people did not do these things—if the bus driver stayed home, or the movie projectionist didn't show up for work. Together, think of more examples.

2. Decide together on jobs for each family member to do. Should people be able to do only the things they like? Talk together about this.

3. Turn a household task into a game. Decide together how long it will take to do the job. Time yourselves against the clock.

Listening to the radio or a record while you do the job makes it more fun. This helps the work get done faster, too.

Children need to learn early how others are affected when chores are not done. Talk about why it is necessary to do things we don't want to do, and why we should not expect others to do our work.

This activity also gives children an early lesson in how to make good decisions.

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# How Time Flies

**"I don't have time to do all I need time to do." Sound familiar? Planning our time is one of the most useful things we can learn. Knowing how long something will take can save time and tempers.**

## What you'll need

Paper
Pencil
Clock
Calendar

## What to do

1. Together, write down your estimates of how long it takes to do certain tasks (such as getting ready for school or work in the morning; fixing a meal).

   Use a clock to time at least one of these tasks. Then take turns timing each other. (But be realistic—it's not necessarily a race.)

2. See what part of a job can be done ahead of time, such as deciding at bedtime what to wear the next day.

3. Talk about at least 2 places you and your children go where you must be on time. What do you do to make sure you are on time?

4. Put a monthly calendar with large spaces where everyone can see it. Each member of the family can use a different colored marker to list appointments and social activities.

Being on time, or *not* being on time, affects other people. It is important for children to understand their responsibility for being on time—it's not just for grown-ups.

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# Homework Made Easy(!)

**Homework without nagging is much to be desired. Have your child try a homework chart.**

## What you'll need

Paper
Marker, pen, or pencil
Clock

## What to do

1. Have (or help) your child do the following: Create a homework chart out of a sturdy, large-sized piece of paper.

| Subject | Mon. | Tues. | Wed. | Thur. | Fri. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arts | | | | | |
| English | | | | | |
| History | | | | | |
| Math | | | | | |
| Science | | | | | |

Attach a colored marker or pen so that it is always handy.

Each day after school, put a check mark in each box in which there is a homework assignment. Circle the check when the homework is completed.

2. Make a new chart for each week. Depending on how many subjects you have, you may be able to put 3 or 4 weeks on each piece of paper.

3. Try to figure out how long it will take to complete homework assignments so you know when you need to start working.

A homework chart can show exactly what needs to be done when, and gives a feeling of accomplishment when an assignment is crossed off.

Talk to your child about homework. Does your child need or want more time or help? Does your child want to devote more time to learning about a certain subject?

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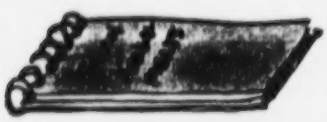
# Divide It Up



**Just about anything is easier to do if it's divided into smaller pieces. As assignments get longer and more complicated, more organizing and planning skills are needed.**

## What you'll need

Homework assignments
Jobs in and around the house
Paper
Pencil

## What to do

1. Choose a big assignment to talk about, such as a geography project. Decide together, and have your child write down, what he or she needs to complete the job. For example:

**Reference materials** (books, maps)
Can you complete the assignment just using your textbook? If not, do you need to go to the library? If so, can you check out books, or will you have to allow time to stay there and use reference books?

**Notes**
Do you have a notebook? Pencils? Will you need note cards?

**Illustrations**
If you need pictures, where will you get them?

**Finished project**
Will it be a stapled report? A poster? A folded brochure? What will you need to complete the job?

2. Decide the order in which the parts of the job need to be done. Number the steps.

   Try to estimate how long each step will take. Work backwards from the date the paper is due in order to see when each part needs to be started. Put start and finish dates next to these steps, then put the assignment on a calendar or homework chart.

3. Together, think about a household job, such as gardening or cleaning. Divide it up into smaller parts.

4. Talk about how adults divide work on their jobs or at home.

This trick of dividing big jobs into small pieces helps make all jobs easier and can save a lot of wear and tear on everyone when it's time to hand in a school assignment.

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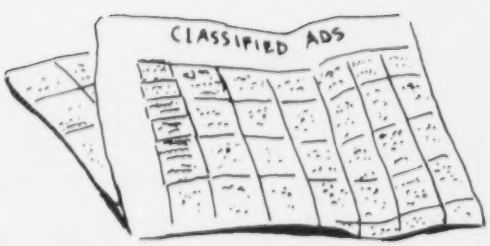
# Help Wanted

**Older students are interested in life beyond school. You can help them have a realistic sense of what's out there.**

## What you'll need

Pen or pencil
Paper
Newspaper "help wanted" ads
Friends and neighbors




## What to do

1. Talk with your child: "What job do you think you would like to do when you get out of school? What training do you think you will need to get this job?"

2. Suggest that your child pick two adults he or she knows, such as neighbors or relatives, to interview briefly about their jobs.

   Help your child think of at least 3 questions to write down, leaving space for the answers. Sample questions: What is your job? How long have you held it? What kind of special training did you need?

   Have your child do the interviews. (You may want to help him or her get started.)

After the interview, talk about what your child learned. Now your child will be more comfortable doing the next step.

3. Read a page of the newspaper help wanted ads together. Have your child find ads for three jobs that he or she might want in the future. Talk together about the training needed for each job: Can some of it be learned on the job? How much schooling is necessary?

Have your child find people who already have these jobs and interview them.

Remember that there will be many new kinds of jobs in the future. What children—and adults, too—need to do is be flexible and keep on learning.



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# How Can I Help?

**We need to think about more than our own interests and ask "How can I help others?"**

## What you'll need

Newspaper and magazine articles

## What to do

1. Together, find newspaper articles about people who get involved. Look for ways to help other people that involve your child's interests.

2. What are some everyday good deeds? Ask your children to think back and remember a time when they helped another person. Think big and think small.

3. Discuss community food drives and volunteer tutoring programs. Suggest that your children check with a local religious group, community or recreation center, school, or library.

4. Explore the possibility of joining a young people's group that does community service.

5. Ask your children to name at least two things they could do today or tomorrow to help others. What will it take? Encourage your children to make a commitment.

**Taking part in community activities can not only help others, but can also help your child make new friends and learn new skills.**

# TV Time

**Decide how you are going to *use* TV. Watching television can be educational or something we do in our spare time.**

## What you'll need

TV set
TV schedule
Pen or pencil

## What to do

1. Decide together how much TV your family will watch. Read the TV schedule. Have each family member decide what he or she would *like* to watch. Put initials next to everyone's choices.

   Decide what you *will* watch each day or week. Circle your choices. If 2 people want to watch different programs at the same time, try to compromise: take turns.

   Your child's teacher may assign a TV program as homework: make allowances if this happens.

2. Try to find time to watch TV with your child. Be sure they understand what's real and what isn't.

3. Have board games, books, or projects handy so children can do other things when TV time is used up.

If your children watch too much TV, try cutting down a little at a time. Avoid leaving a TV set on all day.

# Parents and the Schools

**Q: When should I talk with my child's teacher?**

Early and often. Contact the teacher at the beginning of the year or as soon as you can. Get acquainted and show your interest.

Let teachers know what they need to know about your child. If your child has special needs, make these known right from the beginning.

If you notice a big change in your child's behavior or attitude, contact the teacher immediately.

The teacher should tell you before the end of a grading period if your child is having trouble; keeping parents informed is an important function of the school.

Remember, parents and teachers work together to help children want to learn and to help them gain self-confidence and self-discipline.

**Q: How do I get the most out of parent-teacher conferences?**

Be prepared to listen as well as to talk. It helps to write out questions before you leave home. Also jot down what you want to tell the teacher. Be prepared to take notes during the conference and ask for an explanation if you don't understand something.

In conferences, the teacher should offer specific details about your child's work and progress. If your child has already received some grades, ask what went into them. Ask how your child is being evaluated.

Discuss your child's talents, skills, hobbies, study habits, and any special sensitivities such as concern about weight or speech difficulties.

Tell the teacher if you think your child needs special help. Tell the teacher about any special family situation, such as a new baby, an illness, or a recent or upcoming move. It is important to tell the teacher about things in your children's lives that might affect their ability to learn.

Ask about specific ways to help your child at home. Try to have an open mind.

At home, think about what the teacher has said and then follow up. If the teacher has told you your child needs to improve in certain areas, check back in a few weeks to see how things are going.

Parents and teachers are partners in helping children.

**Q: What if I don't have time to volunteer as much as I would like?**

Even if you can't volunteer to do work *at* the school building, you can help your child learn when you are at home. The key question is, "What can every parent do

at home, easily and in a few minutes a day, to reinforce and extend what the school is doing?" This is the involvement every family can and must provide.

The schools also need to take steps so parents feel good about what they're doing at home and know they are helping.

What we as parents need to care about is involving ourselves in our children's education outside of school.

Remember, you can encourage your child to work hard. You can give your child the power to succeed in school.

# Notes

This book is based on studies; on materials developed and copyrighted by the Home and School Institute (HSI), MegaSkills® Education Center, 1201 Sixteenth Street NW, Washington, DC 20036; and on the MegaSkills book and program.

## Text Notes

**The Basics**
The following are among the studies that provide documentation for the text material in this publication. Up-to-date research on the family's role in education is not easy to find in popularly accessible libraries, even in bookstores. Selected below are some of the more easily found sources.

For those interested in more information on these and other studies in the field, it can be helpful to check with university and other school libraries as well as with the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education.

**Where Our Children Learn**
Benjamin Bloom, (1981). *All Our Children Learning.* New York: McGraw Hill.

Reginald Clark, (1983). *Family Life and School Achievement.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Alan Ginsburg and Sandra Hanson, (1988). *Gaining Ground: Values and High School Success.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

Dorothy Rich, (1985). *The Forgotten Factor in School Success: The Family.* Washington, D.C.: Home and School Institute.

S.G. Timmer et al., (1984). "How Children Use Time" in *Time, Goods, and Well Being.* Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research. University of Michigan.

James Coleman, (1991). *Parental Involvement in Education.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

James Comer, (1988). "Educating Poor, Minority Children." *Scientific American*, 259:42-48.

Ann Henderson, Editor, (1987). *The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement.* Columbia, Md.: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Lynn Balster Liontos, (1992). *At Risk Families and Schools: Becoming Partners.* Eugene, Ore.: University of Oregon, ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management.

National Commission on Children, (1992). *Beyond Rhetoric: A New American Agenda for Children and Families.* Washington, D.C.

**What Our Children Learn From Us**
Joyce Epstein, Editor, (1991). "Parent Involvement" (Special Section). *KAPPAN* 72.

Educational Testing Service, (1989). *Crossroads in American Education.* Princeton, N.J.: National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Robert Hess et al., (1987). "Cultural Variations in Socialization for School Achievement." *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 8.

A.M. Pallas et al., (1987). "Children Who Do Exceptionally Well in First Grade." *Sociology of Education* 60.

Dorothy Rich, (1988, 1992). *MegaSkills® In School and In Life: The Best Gift You Can Give Your Child.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Herbert J. Walberg, (1984). "Families as Partners in Educational Productivity." *KAPPAN* 65.

**How Our Children Learn From Us**
Educational Testing Service, (1989). *A World of Differences: An International Assessment of Mathematics and Science.* Princeton, N.J.: National Assessment of Educational Progress.

L. M. Laosa, (1980). "Maternal Teaching Strategies in Chicano and Anglo-American Families: The Influence of Culture and Education on Maternal Behavior." *Child Development* 51.

Harold Stevenson and James Stigler, (1992). *The Learning Gap.* New York: Summit Books.

U.S. Department of Education, (1986). *What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning.*

## "Activities" Notes

All of the activities in this section have been adapted from the following copyrighted home learning activity programs of The Home and School Institute (HSI), MegaSkills Education Center.

*Learning is Homegrown*, developed for First Tennessee Bank.

*MegaSkills® Workshop Program*, HSI National Training Initiative.

*Project ADD* (Alexandria's Dynamic Duo), developed for Alexandria City, Va. Public Schools.

*Project PACT* (Parents and Children Together), developed for Arlington County, Va. Public Schools.

## Parents and the Schools

All of the material in this section has been adapted from *The Parents Q and A Library*, a copyrighted program developed by The Home and School Institute under a grant from The Work in America Institute.

# Acknowledgments

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**Dorothy Rich**, Ed.D., is the founder and president of the Home and School Institute in Washington, D.C. She has been designing programs for families and teachers since 1964, and is the author of *MegaSkills® In School and In Life: The Best Gift You Can Give Your Child*. Ms. Rich is a recognized expert on family learning and literacy. She developed the MegaSkills Workshops for parents now sponsored by school systems and businesses in 40 states, and the Classroom Management Through MegaSkills training program for teachers. She also designed "New Partnerships for Student Achievement" under a grant from the MacArthur Foundation; has served on the National Assessment Governing Board; has testified before the U.S. Senate and the National Governors' Association; and consults with state and local school systems and business groups nationally and internationally.

**Betty MacDonald** has studied at the Art Students League and The Chinese Institute in New York, and at Columbia University. She has won numerous awards and is in *Who's Who in American Art*. Her work has been exhibited throughout the United States and the world in such places as Italy, Brazil, the former Soviet Union, Kenya, Niger, and Botswana. Ms. MacDonald's art is in the permanent collections of several museums including the National Museum of American History (Smithsonian Institution), the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; and the Museum of Modern Art, Buenos Aires, Argentina. She has taught many courses for the Smithsonian Institution.

## What We Can Do To Help Our Children Learn:

Listen to them and pay attention to their problems.

Read with them.

Tell family stories.

Limit their television watching.

Have books and other reading materials in the house.

Look up words in the dictionary with them.

Encourage them to use an encyclopedia.

Share favorite poems and songs with them.

Take them to the library—get them their own library cards.

Take them to museums and historical sites, when possible.

Discuss the daily news with them.

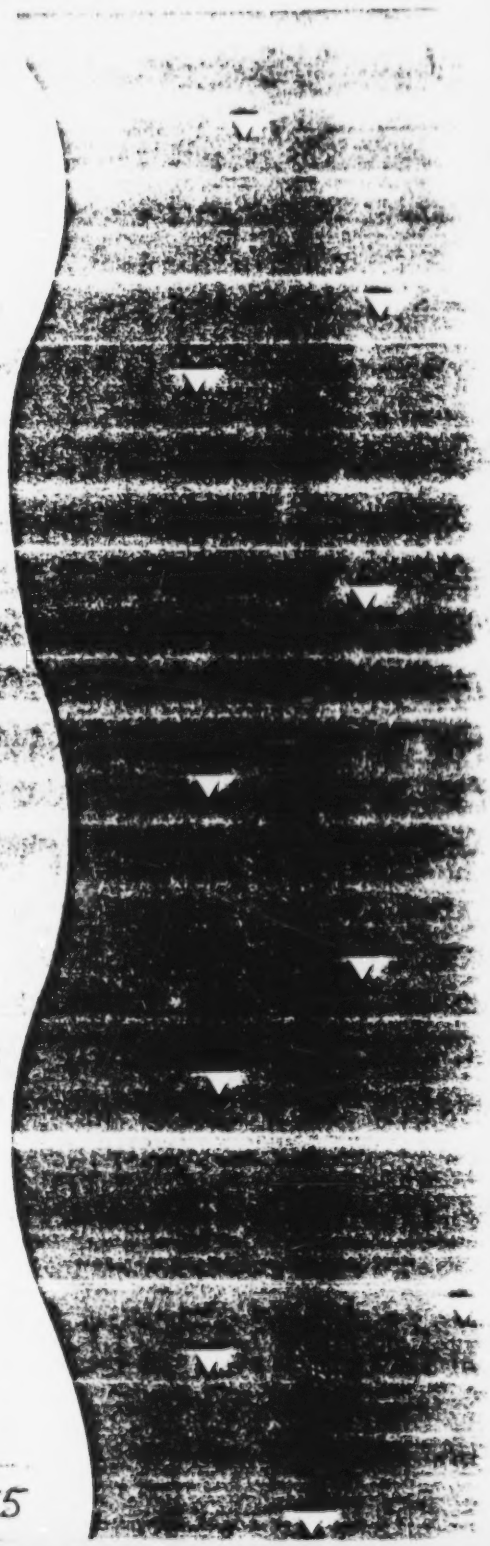
Go exploring with them and learn about plants, animals, and geography.

Find a quiet place for them to study.

Review their homework.

Meet with their teachers.

Do you have other ideas?



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